

Message Text

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PAGE 01 COTONO 00729 180607Z
ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 EB-08 COME-00 MCE-00 CIAE-00 INR-10
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R 171100Z MAY 78
FM AMEMBASSY COTONOU
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 743

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: ETRD, DM, US
SUBJ: POTENTIAL SALE OF ARMORED LIMOUSINES TO GPRB

1. BENINESE GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS LAST WEEK DISCUSSED POSSIBLE PURCHASE FROM AN AMERICAN FIRM OF ARMOURED LIMOUSINES VALUED AT \$1.4 MILLION. TWO REPRESENTATIVES OF THE FIRM OF HESS AND EISENHARDT INT., BASED IN CINCINNATI, ARRIVED IN COTONOU MAY 11 AT THE INVITATION OF THE GOVERNMENT OF PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF BENIN (GPRB). THEY WERE QUICKLY ABLE TO MEET WITH FOREIGN MINISTER ALLADAYE AND MEMBERS OF THE GOV'T COMMITTEE ON SECURITY IN ORDER TO PRESENT THEIR PACKAGE, WHICH IS TO INCLUDE ONE CADILLAC, ONE MERCEDES, AND FIVE OR SIX LESS HEAVILY ARMORED PEOGEOTS. ALTHOUGH NO COMMITMENT WAS MADE, THE BUSINESSMEN REPORTED THAT THEIR PROPOSAL HAD BEEN VERY FAVORABLY RECEIVED, AND THAT THE COMMITTEE DID NOT APPEAR TO BE WORRIED BY THE STIFF PRICE TAG.

2. COMMENT: THE FACT THAT THE REPRESENTATIVES OF HESS AND EISENHARDT WERE ASKED BY THE BENINESE TO CUT SHORT A EUROPEAN TRIP TO COME TO COTONOU EARLIER THAN PLANNED INDICATES GREAT INTEREST ON THE PART OF THE GPRB IN FINALIZING DEAL SINCE PRE-SIDENT KEREKOU'S FEAR OF ASSASSINATION HAS ALREADY LEAD HIM TO TAKE WIDE-RANGING SECURITY MEASURES, THE PURCHASE OF ARMORED LIMOUSINES IS A LOGICAL EXTENSION OF THAT POLICY. APPROVAL
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OF THE PURCHASE WILL UNDOUBETDLY HAVE TO BE MADE BY PRESIDENT KEREKOU HIMSELF, WHICH WOULD NORMALLY TAKE SOME TIME. HOWEVER, HESS AND EISENHARDT WAS TOLD TO EXPECT A RESPONSE WITHIN THE MONTH. THOMPSON

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